

Fonds de recherche du Québec

Société et Culture
Santé
Nature et Technologies





DEVELOP A COMMON VISION, TAKE ACTION

In my first year as Québec's chief scientist, my mandate was to bring the three Fonds de recherche du Québec together under one banner, with all the project entailed in terms of restructuring the organizations and defining a common vision for the development of research and research training in the province. Touring universities and colleges led to meetings and discussions with researchers, students, research centre directors and university administrators—the stakeholders who constitute the research community in the health, natural sciences, engineering and mathematical sciences, humanities and social sciences, and arts and literature sectors.

In fact, I took to several university, media, public, private and social platforms to explain my role in Québec's research and innovation system as well as the three main objectives of my five-year mandate: drive research and innovation by fostering large-scale intersectoral projects and knowledge transfers to businesses, practice settings and public organizations; enhance the competitiveness of Québec researchers in Canada and abroad; and better support the new generations of researchers. I also spoke of this mission at international events.

The appointment of scientific directors to each Fonds, organizational restructuring, intersectoral project consultation, inter-Fonds committees and Étudiants-chercheurs étoiles awards are among the initiatives set in motion as part of my 2011-2012 mandate.

The upcoming year will be paramount to determining the course of events, since the scientific directors, three boards of directors and I will begin our 2013-2016 strategic planning to establish public research funding trends for the three-year period.

This year's many activities were undertaken within the context of deep change at the Fonds, and I would like to express my gratitude to the Fonds' staff members for their remarkable professionalism and commitment.



Rémi Quirion, OC, PhD, CQ, FRSC
Chief Scientist of Québec

Quebec Chief Scientist's Report

2011-2012

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- **Scientific missions**

- **Development of large-scale intersectoral projects**

- **Excellence and international outreach**

- **Tour of universities and colleges**

- **Administrative reorganization**

- **Building the executive team**

CONTEXT AND MANDATES

On July 11, 2011, Bill 130 came into effect to restructure the three Fonds de recherche du Québec funding agencies. The reform chiefly aimed to establish a definite direction to support and promote research in Québec and, by the same token, better position Québec in the international scientific community, foster and enhance synergies and partnerships between research sectors and provide increased visibility for public research under a common banner here and abroad.

Operating as the Fonds de recherche du Québec, the three Fonds (Nature et technologies, Santé, Société et culture) continue to pursue their mission to promote and financially support research, knowledge dissemination and research training in Québec.

The measure led to three major changes in the structure of the Fonds: the creation of the position of chief scientist, the creation of three positions for scientific directors and the integration of the administrative services of the three Fonds.

The mandates of the chief scientist are to:

- Advise the Minister of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology on research and scientific development in Québec;
- Strive to achieve excellence and ensure the positioning, outreach and promotion of Québec research in Canada and abroad;
- Chair the boards of directors of the three Fonds and coordinate common issues and the development of intersectoral research;
- Oversee the administration of the Fonds' human, material, financial and information resources, as well as merge and integrate the organizations' administrative activities.

In the first year, the chief scientist made the most of every platform he was offered to explain his role, vision for research development and objectives.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON THE CHIEF SCIENTIST

PhD in pharmacology from Université de Sherbrooke, 1980.

Postdoctoral fellowship at the National Institute of Mental Health, USA, 1983.

First scientific director of the Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction, 2001-2009.

Scientific director of the Douglas Institute Research Centre, 2001-2011.

Vice-dean of life sciences and strategic initiatives of the Faculty of Medicine of McGill University and executive director of the International Collaborative Research Strategy for Alzheimer's Disease, 2009-2011.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AS PART OF THE FOUR MANDATES

◆ **Scientific missions**

Development of national and international partnerships

Given his strategic role in the development of research and research training, the chief scientist took part in various scientific missions, including the initiative led by the Ministère du Développement économique, de l'Innovation et de l'Exportation at BIO 2012 in Boston this past June. Aiming to promote Québec's expertise in its sectors of excellence and especially the life sciences, the mission involved institutional visits to the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, the Broad Institute, Harvard University, the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

The chief scientist also collaborates with Julie Payette, Québec's scientific delegate in Washington, to develop partnerships with the United States by promoting Québec's strengths to American stakeholders from the government and research organizations.

In addition, the chief scientist acts as the province's research advocate in Canada and abroad at forums and leading events, including the 8th FENS Forum of Neuroscience in Barcelona in July. He also met with representatives from the Délégation du Québec à Paris and the Québec Government Office in Barcelona.

Moreover, the chief scientist hosted foreign research sector officials.

In March, a delegation from the National Natural Science Foundation of China visited Québec to explore partnership

opportunities with the Fonds de recherche.



BIO 2012

Bringing together some 1 800 exhibitors and over 15 000 visitors from 60 countries, the BIO international convention is the world's leading biotechnology industry event. This year, the delegation from Québec included 170 representatives from the biopharmaceutical industry and researchers.

The delegation contributed to the launch of a life sciences funding program as part of the Québec-Ontario Life Sciences Corridor, an initiative announced at Bio 2011 and spearheaded by the Québec Consortium for Drug Discovery and three leading Ontario organizations: MaRS Innovation, the Ontario Brain Institute and the Ontario Centres of Excellence.

The new program is open to biopharmaceutical researchers in Québec and Ontario from universities and SMEs.

◆◆◆ **Development of large-scale intersectoral projects**

A consultation with a wealth of promising outcomes

Early in 2012, the chief scientist invited members of Québec's research community to submit themes for large-scale intersectoral projects. The proposals had to account for specific criteria, such as the involvement of researchers from the three Fonds, a research training component driven by a new intersectoral and interdisciplinary model, as well as public and private partnership opportunities in Québec, in Canada and abroad.

The scientific community's response was tremendous: over 65 proposals were submitted by each of Québec's universities as well as by colleges and private institutions. It goes without saying that the great diversity of the applications reflects the range of expertise within the province's research system. Themes including sustainable development, population aging, nordicity, green cities, the role of arts and culture in society, primary

health care and social services, mining and minerals processing, ICTs, green chemistry and the pharmaceutical industry were among the topics proposed as part of the consultation. The inter-Fonds intersectoral research committee is now working to develop a funding strategy based on the proposals and driven by new funds from the government and private sector.

◆◆◆ **Excellence and international outreach**

Valuing careers in research

In January 2012, the Fonds de recherche du Québec launched the Étudiants-chercheurs étoiles awards competition for student researchers in the three vast research sectors covered by the Fonds. Spearheaded by the chief scientist, the awards aim to:

- Recognize the excellent research carried out by college and university students (bachelor, master, doctorate), postdoctoral fellows and members of professional corporations following advanced training in the disciplines covered by the three Fonds;

- Promote research careers in Québec;
- Develop links between the Fonds and the student researcher community.

The awards are handed out twice a year, and the Fonds recognize 12 student researchers annually. The Fonds received 205 eligible applications to the first competition: 84 from the Fonds Nature et technologies, 76 from the Fonds Santé and 45 from the Fonds Société et culture.

At a cocktail held in the offices of the Fonds in Montréal on June 27, the

chief scientist met with the first nine recipients of the Étudiants-chercheurs étoiles awards. While each student was clearly set on his or her own academic path, they all shared a passion for research!

When the winners of the second competition are announced in 2013, the chief scientist will bring together the first year's 36 winners.

PROMISING YOUNG RESEARCHERS

The awards chiefly recognize the publications and performances of student researchers—the most common indicators used to evaluate researchers' scientific output. The winners of the awards handed out in the first year published their work in such prestigious journals as *Science* and *Nature*. According to the Observatoire de la science et de la technologie, close to one third of all student researchers have published or closely collaborated on scientific projects. Student researchers are not waiting to earn their degree to compete with researchers!

…❖ Tour of universities and colleges

Meeting the scientific community

As the chief scientist took up his duties in September 2011, he set out on a tour of Québec's universities and a series of meetings in colleges across the province to establish an initial direct contact with researchers, students and research administrators. Appreciated by the host institutions, the visits especially brought to light the high quality of the work carried out by research centres and teams in Québec as well as the great potential of student researchers and their strong aspiration to careers in research. The tour was also an opportunity to assess the relevance of public research funding for Québec and the significance of the concerns voiced by researchers, students and administrators in research centres, universities and colleges.

While topics specific to certain sectors and disciplines were discussed, common broad issues such as support for basic research, research training, international collaborations, research platforms and intersectoral projects were also raised. These shared concerns strengthened the chief scientist's



Rémi Quirion met the community of the Université du Québec en Outaouais on December 1st, 2011.

drive to create three inter-Fonds committees whose work on the issues will serve as the basis for the Fonds' strategic planning. In addition to these committees, the Fonds will lead the Sommet sur le renouveau de la

formation à la recherche - Une question d'avenir pour le Québec, which will be held in the fall.

…❖ Administrative reorganization

Sharing a common vision

With the merger of the Fonds de recherche du Québec, a major administrative restructuring was in order. Services were pooled to support the office of the chief scientist as well as the scientific offices of each Fonds. The Fonds now rely on seven common services: communications and knowledge mobilization, ethics and legal affairs, planning and performance, financial and material resources, human

resources, information systems and Montréal office administrative services. The reorganization was carried out under Bill 100, which came into effect two years ago and aims to reduce government operating budgets.

The merger also led to close collaborations between the chief scientist and the administrators of the three Fonds through weekly meetings with the scientific directors

to discuss sectoral and intersectoral topics. As would any reorganization, the restructuring led to changes in the organizational culture that require certain adjustments by the executives and staff of the three Fonds.

◆ Building the executive team

A proven management team

In the first months of the chief scientist's mandate, one of the priorities was to lead a rigorous selection process to convene the scientific offices of the Fonds de recherche du Québec.

In 2012, the provincial cabinet appointed three scientific directors.

The chief scientist appointed Pierre Prémont as the administrative director and secretary of the boards of directors of the Fonds de

recherche du Québec. In addition, Mylène Deschênes was named the director of ethics and legal affairs, and Benoit Sévigny was chosen as the director of communications and knowledge mobilization.



Maryse Lassonde, Scientific Director of the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Nature et technologies

Before joining the Fonds de recherche du Québec, Ms. Lassonde was a professor in the psychology department at Université de Montréal and the director of the Laboratoire d'électrophysiologie et d'imagerie optique at the Centre hospitalier universitaire Sainte-Justine. She carried out studies in psychology at Université de Montréal and went on to earn a doctorate in psychology from Stanford University in California. She began her teaching and research career at Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, where she spent over 10 years.



Normand Labrie, Scientific Director of the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture

At the time of his appointment, Mr. Labrie was the associate dean of research and a professor in the faculty of education at the University of Toronto (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education-OISE). After earning a doctorate in linguistics from Université Laval and carrying out postdoctoral studies at the Research Centre on Multilingualism at Katholieke Universiteit Brussel, Mr. Labrie began his career as a professor at the OISE, where he spent ten years at the head of the Centre de recherche en éducation franco-ontarienne.



Renaldo Battista, Scientific Director of the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Santé

Dr. Battista was a professor in the health administration department at Université de Montréal since 2004 and held the Canada Research Chair in Health Technology Assessment since 2005. He earned a doctorate of medicine from Université de Montréal as well as a master's in public health and a doctorate in health policy and management from Harvard University. From 1982 to 2003, Dr. Battista was a professor in the department of epidemiology, biostatistics and occupational health and the faculty of medicine at McGill University.

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